

# The Early Years of the War

## MAIN IDEA

The American desire to gain rights and liberties led them to fight for independence from Britain.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Today those same rights and liberties are protected by the U.S. Constitution.

## TERMS & NAMES

George Washington  
mercenary  
strategy

rendezvous  
Battles of  
Saratoga

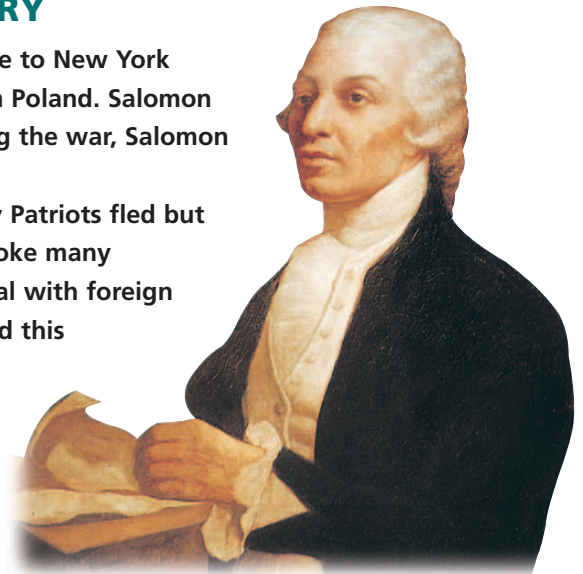
## ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

In search of liberty, Haym Salomon moved from Europe to New York sometime between 1764 and 1775. He was a Jew from Poland. Salomon soon became a successful merchant and banker. During the war, Salomon supported the Patriot cause.

When the British captured New York in 1776, many Patriots fled but Salomon stayed. The British arrested him. Salomon spoke many languages. The British thought he could help them deal with foreign merchants, so they let him out of prison. Salomon used this opportunity to help other prisoners escape.

In 1778, the British wanted to arrest him again, so he fled to Philadelphia and continued to aid the Patriots. He loaned the new government more than \$600,000, which was never repaid.

Like Salomon, many people made hard choices about which side to support during the Revolutionary War. This section discusses those choices and the obstacles Americans faced in the war's early years.



Haym Salomon sacrificed his health and his fortune to help his new country.

## Americans Divided

The issue of separating from Great Britain divided American society. Opinion polls did not exist in the 1700s, so we don't know exactly how many people were on each side. But historians estimate that roughly 20 to 30 percent of Americans were Loyalists, roughly 40 to 45 percent were Patriots, and the rest remained neutral. Most Americans did not support the Revolution.

Both Patriots and Loyalists came from all walks of life and all parts of America. In general, New England and Virginia had high numbers of Patriots. Loyalists were numerous in cities, in New York State, and in the

## Taking Notes

Use your chart to take notes about the early years of the American Revolution.

1776	1777	1778

South. Many Loyalists worked for the British government or were clergy in the Church of England. Some Quakers were Loyalists, although many wanted peace. (Their faith taught that war was wrong.)

The war divided Native Americans, too. For instance, some Iroquois nations fought with the British and others with the Americans. Those Native Americans who joined the British feared that if the Americans won, they would take Native American land. Some Native Americans who lived near colonists and interacted with them sided with the Americans.

African Americans also fought on both sides. At first, slave owners feared that African Americans who had guns might lead slave revolts. Therefore, few states allowed African Americans to enlist, or sign up with the army. Then a British governor offered freedom to any enslaved person who joined the British army. Many slaves ran away to fight for the British. In response, most states began to accept African-American

soldiers. In all, about 5,000 African Americans served in the Continental Army. Many African Americans who did so hoped that American independence would bring greater equality.

Differences over the war split families, too. For example, Benjamin Franklin's son William took Britain's side. The father and son stopped speaking.

## Creating an Army

Because not everyone supported the war, raising an army was difficult. The army also faced other problems. In June 1775, **George Washington** became the commander of the Continental Army. At first, this new national army was formed from state militias, made up of untrained and undisciplined volunteers.

After Congress created the Continental Army, men began to enlist, but most of them didn't stay long. At the start of the war, Congress asked men to enlist only for one year. Later Congress did lengthen the term of service. When the soldiers' time was up, they went home. As a result, Washington's army never numbered more than 17,000 men.

Congress's inability to supply the army also frustrated Washington. The soldiers needed everything—blankets, shoes, food, and even guns and ammunition. Angrily, Washington wrote, "Could I have foreseen what I have, and am likely to experience, no consideration upon earth should have induced [persuaded] me to accept this command."

Many women tried to help the army. Martha Washington and other wives followed their husbands to army camps. The women cooked, did laundry, and

### Background

The Iroquois League had generally kept peace among the Iroquois nations for about 200 years—until the American Revolution.

## AMERICA'S HISTORY MAKERS

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### GEORGE WASHINGTON

1732–1799

At the age of 16, George Washington worked as a surveyor, setting land boundaries in the wilderness. He learned to handle hardship by hunting for food and sleeping outdoors.

In the French and Indian War, Washington had many brushes with death. Yet he wrote, "I heard the bullets whistle, and, believe me, there is something charming in the sound."

That war made him the most famous American officer. People loved him for his courage. As commander of the Continental Army, Washington's popularity helped unite Americans.

**How did Washington's early life prepare him to lead the army?**

### ReadingHistory

#### A. Analyzing

##### Causes Why

would the lack of agreement about the war make it hard to raise an army?

### ReadingHistory

#### B. Solving

**Problems** How did Washington try to solve the problem of leading a small, inexperienced force against a large professional army?

nursed sick or wounded soldiers. A few women even helped fight. Mary Hays earned the nickname “Molly Pitcher” by carrying water to tired soldiers during a battle. Deborah Sampson dressed as a man, enlisted, and fought in several engagements.

Building an army was crucial to Washington’s plan. To the British, the Americans were disorganized, inexperienced rebels. The British thought that if they won a decisive battle, the Americans would give up. By contrast, Washington’s main goal was to survive. To do so, he needed to keep an army in the field, win some battles—no matter how small—and avoid a crushing defeat. He knew he could not hope to win a major battle until he had a large, well-equipped army.

## Struggle for the Middle States

As Chapter 6 explains, Washington had forced the British to retreat from Boston in March 1776. He then hurried his army to New York City, where he expected the British to go next. One British goal was to occupy coastal cities so that their navy could land troops and supplies in those cities. From there, they could launch their military campaigns.

Washington’s hunch was correct. In July 1776, Britain’s General William Howe arrived in New York with a large army. Then in August, more soldiers arrived, including about 9,000 Hessian mercenaries. A

**mercenary** is a professional soldier hired to fight for a foreign country. British soldiers usually signed up for life—which discouraged enlistment. So Britain needed mercenaries, whom it hired from the German states.

For several months, the British and American armies fought for New York State. Finally, the British forced Washington to retreat through New Jersey. By December, when the American army crossed the Delaware River into Pennsylvania, it was in terrible condition. Charles Willson Peale, a Philadelphia painter who watched the crossing, saw one muddy soldier who “had lost all his clothes. He was in an old, dirty blanket jacket, his beard long, and his face so full of sores he could not clean it.” To Peale’s shock, the soldier called his name. He was Peale’s brother!

Political writer Thomas Paine also witnessed the hard conditions and the soldiers’ low spirits on the retreat. To

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These Hessian boots weighed about 12 pounds a pair.

### Background

The British-hired mercenaries came from a part of Germany called Hesse, which is the origin of the term *Hessian*.







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Thomas Sully's *Passage of the Delaware* shows Washington at the Delaware River, leading to the American attack on the British at Trenton, New Jersey.

urge them to keep fighting, Paine published the first in a series of pamphlets called *The American Crisis*.

#### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it *now*, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.

Thomas Paine, *The American Crisis*

#### ReadingHistory

**C. Recognizing Propaganda** How does this passage promote the American cause?

Washington hoped a victory would encourage his weary men. He also knew that he must attack the British quickly because most of his soldiers would leave once their enlistments ended on December 31.

Late on December 25, 1776, Washington's troops rowed across the icy Delaware River to New Jersey. From there, they marched in bitter, early-morning cold to Trenton to surprise the Hessians, some of whom were sleeping after their Christmas celebration. The Americans captured or killed more than 900 Hessians and gained needed supplies. Washington's army won another victory at Princeton eight days later. These victories proved that the American general was better than the British had thought. The American army began to attract new recruits.

### Britain's Strategy

Meanwhile, the British were pursuing a **strategy**—an overall plan of action—to seize the Hudson River Valley. If successful, they would cut off New England from the other states. The strategy called for three armies to meet at Albany, New York. General John Burgoyne would lead a force south from Canada. Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger would lead his army from Lake Ontario down the Mohawk Valley. Burgoyne expected General Howe to follow the Hudson north from New York City.

Burgoyne left Canada in June 1777 with an army that included British, Hessians, and Iroquois. In July, they captured Fort Ticonderoga.

Called “Gentleman Johnny” by his soldiers, Burgoyne enjoyed traveling slowly and throwing parties to celebrate victories. After Ticonderoga, his delays gave the Americans time to cut down trees to block his route. They also burned crops and drove off cattle, leaving the countryside bare of supplies for the British troops.

Things grew rougher during the last 25 miles of Burgoyne’s march to Albany. On a map, the route looked easy, but it really crossed a swampy wilderness. The army had to build bridges and roads. Burgoyne took four weeks to reach the Hudson. Still confident, he looked forward to the **rendezvous**, or meeting, with St. Leger and Howe in Albany.

On August 4, Burgoyne received a message from Howe. He would not be coming north, Howe wrote, because he had decided to invade Pennsylvania to try to capture General Washington and Philadelphia—where the Continental Congress met. “Success be ever with you,” wrote Howe. Yet Burgoyne needed Howe’s soldiers, not his good wishes.

Howe did invade Pennsylvania. In September 1777, he defeated but did not capture Washington at the Battle of Brandywine. Howe then occupied Philadelphia. In October, Washington attacked Howe at Germantown. Washington lost the battle, however, and retreated.

## Battles Along the Mohawk

As Burgoyne received Howe’s message, St. Leger faced his own obstacle in reaching Albany. In the summer of 1777, he was trying to defeat a small American force at Fort Stanwix in the Mohawk River valley of New York. St. Leger’s forces included Iroquois led by Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, also called Thayendanegea (THĪ•ehn•DAHG•ee).

Brant and his sister, Molly, had strong ties to the British. Molly was a British official’s wife, and Joseph was a convert to the Church of England. Both Joseph and Molly tried to convince the Iroquois to fight for the British, who upheld Iroquois rights to their land.

During August 1777, American general Benedict Arnold led a small army up the Mohawk River. He wanted to chase the British away from



### ReadingHistory

#### D. Evaluating

Review Howe’s two goals for his invasion of Pennsylvania. Was he successful?

### Vocabulary

**convert:** a person who changes religions



The Iroquois chief Joseph Brant was a British ally.

Fort Stanwix. Arnold sent a captured Loyalist and some Iroquois who were American allies to spread the rumor that he had a large army.

The trick worked. St. Leger's troops were afraid they were about to be outnumbered. The army retreated so fast that it left behind tents, cannon, and supplies. Because of St. Leger's flight and Howe's refusal to follow the strategy, no one was left to rendezvous with Burgoyne.

## Saratoga: A Turning Point

By this time, Burgoyne's army was running out of supplies, and it needed horses. The general sent a raiding party into Vermont to see what it could find. The raiding party encountered New England troops, who badly defeated it at the Battle of Bennington on August 16, 1777.

Despite this setback, Burgoyne's army headed slowly toward Albany. On the way, it met a powerful Continental Army force led by General Horatio Gates. Gates's soldiers were waiting on a ridge called Bemis Heights, near Saratoga, New York. There the Americans had created fortifications, or built-up earthen walls, behind which to fight. The Polish engineer Tadeusz Kosciuszko (TAH•deh•oosh KAWSH•choosh•kaw) had helped the Americans do this.

Burgoyne would have to break through the fortifications to proceed to Albany. On September 19, he attacked. While Gates commanded the Americans on the ridge, Benedict Arnold led an attack on nearby

### ReadingHistory

#### E. Reading a Map

Find Saratoga on the map on page 197. Notice how close it is to Burgoyne's goal of Albany.

## CITIZENSHIP TODAY

### Exercising Free Speech

The British could have charged Thomas Paine with a crime for writing *The American Crisis*. The crime was sedition, or stirring up rebellion. By saying what he thought, Paine risked going to prison. Today U.S. citizens have the right to speak freely without fear of jail.

Like Thomas Paine, some students have used free speech to urge people to take action. For example, the Sidney Lanier Middle School in Houston, Texas, has published its school newspaper on the Internet. In October 1996, one writer urged other students to get involved in that year's election, saying, "Even though you will not be able to vote yet, you can still influence your parents to do so."

These students are working together to produce a school newspaper.



### How Do You Exercise Free Speech?

1. Working in a small group, choose an issue that you care about. Look through newsmagazines for ideas.
2. Use a cluster diagram to record your feelings and opinions about the issue.
3. As a group, decide what action you think people should take on the issue.
4. Write an article expressing the group's opinion. Each member should read the article and suggest changes. Revise the article.
5. Send the revised article to the editorial page of your school or local newspaper.



See Citizenship Handbook, page 282.

For more about free speech . . .



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Freeman's Farm. His men repeatedly charged the British and inflicted heavy casualties. Still, the British held their position.

On October 7, another battle broke out. Again Arnold led daring charges against the British. Although hundreds of muskets were firing at him, he galloped through the battlefield "like a madman," a sergeant later said. Frightened, Burgoyne's Hessian mercenaries began to fall back. Eventually, a bullet tore into Arnold's leg and stopped him. Even so, the Americans forced Burgoyne to retreat.

Burgoyne's army moved slowly through heavy rain to a former army camp at Saratoga. By the time they arrived, the men were exhausted. Some fell in the mud and slept in their wet uniforms. The Continental Army then surrounded Burgoyne's army and fired on it day and night without stopping. Burgoyne decided to surrender. The series of conflicts that led to this surrender is known as the **Battles of Saratoga**.

The Battles of Saratoga had two very different consequences. As Benedict Arnold was recovering from his wound, he married a woman who was a Loyalist. Over time, Arnold came to feel that Congress had not rewarded him enough for his heroic actions at Saratoga and other battles. Influenced by his bitterness and his wife, he betrayed his army. In 1780, he agreed to turn over an American fort to the British. Although his plot was discovered before he could carry it out, he escaped. Even today, the name *Benedict Arnold* is used to mean traitor.

On the positive side, the victory at Saratoga was a turning point in the Revolution. It caused European nations to think that the Americans might win their war for independence. As you will read in Section 2, several European nations decided to help America in its struggle.

## America's HERITAGE

### THE FIRST FLAG

June 14 is Flag Day in the United States. On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress adopted the stars and stripes design for the U.S. flag. According to legend, a Philadelphia seamstress named Betsy Ross designed the first flag, illustrated below. Historians have found no evidence to support this legend. However, Ross did make flags for the Pennsylvania navy.



### ReadingHistory

**F. Forming and Supporting Opinions** Which of the two consequences of the Battles of Saratoga was more significant? Why?

## Section 1 Assessment

### 1. Terms & Names

**Explain the significance of:**

- George Washington
- mercenary
- strategy
- rendezvous
- Battles of Saratoga

### 2. Using Graphics

Use a cluster diagram like the one shown to list the difficulties Americans faced in the early years of the war.



Which difficulty do you think was hardest to overcome?

### 3. Main Ideas

- How were Americans divided over the issue of separating from Great Britain?
- Why was it difficult for George Washington to form and keep a large army?
- How did the Battles of Saratoga mark a turning point in the war?

### 4. Critical Thinking

**Contrasting** How did the British and American strategies differ during the early years of the war?

#### THINK ABOUT

- what the British expected from the Americans
- Washington's main goals for the American army
- why Burgoyne invaded from Canada

### ACTIVITY OPTIONS

#### LANGUAGE ARTS

#### ART

Learn more about a Revolutionary War leader. Write a brief **biography** or create a **trading card** with a picture on one side and important facts on the other.